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ABSTRACT

This practicum paper describes the use of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation self-study criteria in the expansion and revision of a staff handbook for a Florida preschool. The existing staff handbook and staff training programs were found to provide inadequate information on school health and safety procedures, employee benefit policies, and standard ethical practices expected from early childhood professionals. To address these deficiencies, a series of inservice training sessions were held to increase staff awareness in the three areas. Small group activities were used to involve the staff in solving hypothetical health and safety problems and ethical dilemmas. Employee benefits were explained in a separate inservice session. Documents drafted from the joint participation of administration and staff were included in an expanded and improved staff handbook. Post-training results from staff surveys and questionnaires indicated a substantial increase in staff awareness of health and safety procedures, employee benefit policies, and standard ethical practices. Thirteen appendices contain copies of various handouts used in the training sessions, staff questionnaires, and questionnaire results. (Contains 16 references.) (MDM)

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The Use Of The NAEYC Accreditation Self-Study Criteria In The Expansion And Revision Of A Staff Handbook

by

Matilda P. Smith

Cohort 57

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A Practicum Report Presented to the
Master's Programs In Child Care, Youth Care, and Family Support
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Of Master Of Science

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Abstract

The use of the NAEYC accreditation self-study criteria in the expansion and revision of a staff handbook. Smith, Matilda P., 1994: Practicum Report, NOVA University, Master's Program for Child Care Administrators. Descriptors: Day Care Centers/ Guides/Handbooks/ Young Children/National Association of/ Educational/Administration /Handbooks/Faculty/ Administrative Policy/ Early Childhood Education/ Staff Development/ Compensation/ Fringe Benefits/ Ethics/Code of Ethics/ Health and Safety/ Occupational.

The staff members in a preschool setting lacked necessary information in three program areas identified by a formal staff questionnaire. The staff handbook and the existing staff training programs did not include adequate information in health and safety procedures, the program's employee benefit policies, and standard ethical practices expected from early childhood professionals.

The author designed and implemented a series of inservice training sessions which would increase staff awareness in the three subjects identified. The strategies included small group activities which involved the staff in problem solving responses to "real life" situations regarding the health and safety of the children, and appropriate ethical solutions to various dilemmas encountered by early childhood caregivers. In order to expand their understanding of employee benefits offered by the program, the author created a career continuum in which the benefit plan was an integral part and the main topic of an inservice session. Documents drafted from the joint participation of administration and staff were designed for inclusion in an expanded staff handbook.

Post-training results from staff surveys and questionnaires displayed a favorable and substantial increase in staff awareness in the fields of program health and safety, employee benefits and professional ethics. These training procedures will continue in years to come and produced important staff orientation materials and additions to the staff handbook. Appendices include sample surveys and documents.

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Chapter I

Introduction and Background

Within the past sixteen years, the preschool site of this practicum has grown from a private home setting of twelve children ages three through five to its present enrollment of one hundred and seventy-four preschoolers. It currently operates as a for profit center during a nine month school year calendar. From September through May the staff and children enjoy two large "home-like" buildings containing over six thousand square feet of space in a five-acre rural setting with two large fenced playgrounds, a wildlife nature garden, and a separated pasture area with small farm animals. The curriculum follows the developmentally appropriate practices as outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987). A short summer calendar is offered as a smaller camp-like program. A total of one hundred children (ages 4-10) participated during the summer of 1993.

For the purpose of this study, the "program" was limited to the September-May school year. Its twenty-four employees consisted of two administrators; the Executive and Managing Directors; an Administrative Assistant; a nineteen member teaching staff, nine Lead Teachers, one of which was designated Supervising Teacher, and ten Assistant Teachers; and two Custodial/Maintenance persons. In order to encourage a spirit of cooperation and multi-level communication, an advisory board was formed in 1991. It included the two administrative positions, four volunteer parents and four volunteer staff members. All policy decisions were finalized and adopted by the two directors, yet, the other advisory board members offered valuable perspectives and suggestions in the decision making process.

While the executive director initiated the long range planning, the parent support programs, parent education functions, curriculum initiatives and the fundraising events, the author's responsibilities as managing director included all duties related to the day to day operations of the school. These encompassed fiscal responsibility, personnel policies, program information services, legal and medical procedures, and the supervision and evaluation of all professional and support personnel. The position was designed to provide consistency and relevancy to the program's daily procedures and routines toward the fulfillment of its mission statement. An administrative assistant position was added to facilitate the duties of both administrators. Each of the ten class groups of children was staffed by a lead teacher working with an assistant teacher. An experienced lead teacher also served as supervising teacher in curriculum planning with the teaching staff.

The program was one of the three oldest private preschools in a rapidly expanding area on Florida's east coast. While situated in an outlying rural section of a recently designated urban area, its enrollment reflected the more professionally oriented middle and upper middle class families. A small number of children came from lower socio-economic households, and attended with the assistance of the district funded Early Intervention Program, or the program's financial assistance "scholarship" fund. The program often began its school year with families still on a waiting list for any forthcoming openings in enrollment.

Like much of mid-Florida, the area's local economy was service oriented toward the retired and tourist populations. The public school system, the local hospital and the citrus industry were the leading employers in the area.

The author joined the program in 1990 as a business manager. Having shelved a previously earned Bachelor's Degree in education, this preschool management position provided the opportunity to merge prior educational training with fourteen years of life experience as a small business employer from a service related industry. Additionally, in 1989 the author completed courses in teaching reading (Grades K-12) in order to obtain state teacher certification. Thus, the author was able to combine several abilities, interests, background experiences and interpersonal skills into a single relevant administrative position. Graduate studies specific to child care administration began in the fall of 1991.

As the program's managing director, the author was involved in the decision to seek program accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and was designated the primary administrator of the final self-study and succeeding administrative responsibilities. Following discussion with the executive director and receipt of the NAEYC accreditation documents, a staff orientation to the self-study portions of the accreditation process was initiated in the spring of 1993. A "trial run" of the staff questionnaire section was completed by the twenty classroom teachers. The results were tabulated and areas of procedural and policy weakness within the program were identified.

Having experienced from previous employment the benefits of an effective employee handbook, the author correlated some of the areas of program weakness indicated from the trial self-study with information lacking in the program's existing staff handbook. After examination of both the staff questionnaire criteria and the current handbook, an administrative decision was made to revise and expand the

manual in those areas of relevant missing or insufficient information. The initiation of this process was the sole responsibility of the author with final authorization for handbook inclusion to be by mutual consent of the author and the executive director. The staff having agreed to the benefits of NAEYC accreditation and participation in same was an integral part of the process of creating information for the expansion and revision of the handbook. A point of clarification is relevant here. The scope of the staff handbook in this instance did not include curriculum goals specifically, and was a separate staff resource from the program's curriculum guide.

Chapter II

The Problem

The existing staff handbook omitted several aspects of the workplace. It was not modeled after any other professional handbook or the literature of any specific organization, or measured against the criteria of any nationally recognized child care association. Therefore, it was difficult to judge its value until an occasion arose which determined it resourcefulness.

The staff handbook was in need of expansion and revision. In order for it to be a continual and effective resource and an invaluable tool for orienting new staff to the workplace, it should have included all major aspects of the employer/employee relationship. While this author realized that a staff handbook by its very nature is site specific, it was believed that its contents should be inclusive of a more generally accepted collection of quality oriented program criteria, such as that established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in 1991.

The preliminary impetus to handbook revision resulted from data collected in the Spring of 1993 after the use of the NAEYC Self-Study Staff Questionnaire (NAEYC, 1991, pp.80-91) which indicated a lack of understanding or a miscommunication in the areas of 1) health and safety procedures, 2) wage and benefit policies, and 3) program expectations for ethical conduct by staff members. More specifically, the staff responses to three questions in the process initiated an administrative response to examine the criteria more closely and plan to take appropriate action. From the Guide to Accreditation (1991) the questions were:

D-3. New staff are adequately oriented about the goals and philosophy of the center, emergency health and safety procedures, special needs of children assigned to the staff member's care, guidance and classroom management techniques, planned daily activities of the center and expectations for ethical conduct. (p.85)

E-4. Benefit packages for full time staff are negotiated to meet staff members' needs and should include paid leave (annual, sick, and/or personal), medical insurance, retirement, subsidized child care, educational benefits, and other options unique to the situation. Benefits for part-time staff are available on a prorated basis. (p.87)

H-22a. Staff are familiar with emergency procedures such as operation of fire extinguishers and procedures for severe storm warnings (where necessary). (p.90)

Only seven of the twenty respondents to D-3 felt that the criterion was "met". Moreover, written comments attached to the question indicated the greatest staff uncertainties in the areas of proper health and safety procedures and expectations for ethical conduct. Additionally, written comments to questions E-4 indicated that only four persons felt they understood the existing policies in wage and benefit determinations. The written comments suggested that while staff realized that there was a benefit package, the specifics of its determination were not clear. Fifty percent of the responses to H-22a reiterated that some health and safety procedures were unclear. As suggested by Human Resources Management in its publication Personnel Practices, written policies and work rules provided in an employee handbook should "...get rid of the guessing as to just what the policy is"

(p. 5406). This author believed that misunderstandings in the three areas might be resolved through handbook revision and its accompanying activities.

To understand why the program's existing handbook might not provide enough information in the three identified areas, one could reflect on its origination. In 1990, the handbook was developed to consolidate many separate written policy statements, memos, and handouts regarding appropriate practices and procedures while in the employment of the program. The literature had been created over a period of twelve years by the owner/executive director and various administrators in the rapidly growing program. Its thirty pages were combined in a three ring notebook with a table of contents listing the categorized handouts. It included the philosophy of the program and information on the various day to day concerns regarding the employee/employer relationship, the use of the facility, several emergency procedures, some compensation and benefit information, and suggestions for appropriate staff/child and staff/parent interactions. Thus, it became an assemblage of available written information. While proving to be handy, the time allotted for its compilation prevented it from being evaluated for its completeness. The handbook was to be just one of several tools necessary for better orientation of new staff. In the two succeeding years since its origin, persons instrumental to its development altered their job descriptions and the staff handbook became an unrevised reference. The author realized that an effective handbook was an extensive and on-going process. The current practicum application was yet another step in what could become an annual process.

Secondly, any evaluative measures by staff of policy or procedural misunderstandings had begun only with the program's recent initiation of the

NAEYC accreditation self-study. And, that originated only at the end of the previous school year.

Thirdly, and in what appeared to be, in this author's opinion, an innate trait of early childhood administration, immediate and daily concerns often took precedence over long range projects. Staff handbooks are developed over several years, and may be postponed in the shuffle of daily administrative priorities.

However, a staff handbook should be an effective tool for everyday use or referral by a staff member. It can be a comprehensive instrument which enables a staff member, new or returning, to understand his individual responsibilities to the program and the program's obligations to the individual. "In the real world, you and your staff will need to refer to an employee handbook to resolve disputes and miscommunications. A well conceived employee handbook helps soften these bumps and grinds by (1) spelling out what types of behavior are encouraged and discouraged and (2) informing employees about their rights and benefits" (Perreault and Neugebauer, 1988, p.21). It should create a complete picture of the work setting and prove to be an appropriate orientation guide for the new employee. As an indicator of its relevance and ultimate reliability as a program resource, the author believed it should include information which would correlate to the standards of high quality as addressed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and adopted by those programs accredited by the association.

In a broader analogy, written or formalized policies could be compared to essential elements supporting the "structure" of an organization much like the supporting beams in the construction of a house (Jorde-Bloom, Sheerer, and Britz, 1991). Relevant and responsible handbook revisions would establish a more solid

understanding by each staff member of expectations in the three areas defined by the questionnaire as the weaker elements of the structure.

Chapter III

Solution Strategy

Goals and Objectives

The ultimate goal of this practicum was to produce staff handbook revisions which would reflect a greater understanding by staff of the program's policies, procedures, and expectations regarding the health and safety of the staff and children, the compensation and benefits offered for staff, and a specific code of ethical conduct in the care and education of young children. These three areas of misunderstanding identified by the NAEYC self-study Staff Questionnaire were addressed over a ten week practicum time line.

Each of the three program elements had a corresponding primary objective:

1. Program health and safety procedures--

   By the end of the third week, staff would increase their practice of appropriate health and safety procedures by at least 50%.

2. Benefit compensation policies--

   By the seventh week, twenty of the twenty four staff members would demonstrate an understanding of the benefit plan offered by the program.

3. Professional code of ethics--

   By the ninth week, twenty of the twenty four staff would acknowledge and accept a written formal code of ethical conduct.

Finally, and as a collective measure, the author compared the results of the NAEYC staff questionnaire previously administered with more current responses. This was scheduled to occur during the beginning of the program's official

accreditation process which coincided with the tenth week of the practicum's implementation period. Tallies and comments from questions D-3, E-4, and H-22a were examined to determine if a majority of staff cited these criteria as presently "met". A significant decrease in the number of "not met" or "partially met" responses would be indicative of greater staff awareness and understanding in those areas previously identified as program weaknesses. The author anticipated an increase in the "met" responses for each question of at least 40%.

Strategies Employed

Handbook organizers need to supplement the written guidance of a staff handbook with on-going staff development (Perreault and Neugebauer, 1991). A common four step approach was implemented for the three areas identified. This multi-phase approach included 1) staff acknowledgment and recognition of the specific weakness, 2) an inservice training and/or group brainstorming session focusing on each weakness, 3) group consensus of appropriate corrections or solutions, and 4) administrative adoption of relevant revisions to the next handbook.

The following ten week calendar implemented a systematic progress through these phases and provided an appropriate framework for planning and subsequent evaluation by the author who later assumed the responsibility of adding any new procedures or policies to the staff handbook:

Weeks 1-3 Program Health and Safety Procedures

(A) A two-hour staff inservice health and safety workshop was planned and presented in which 1) general health concerns were addressed by a local public

nurse from the county's public health unit and 2) the author led two activities in which the staff participated. The nurse addressed the issues of proper hand washing procedures for staff and children and the use of universal health precautions by the staff when interacting with each other and the children. In conjunction with the speaker's presentation, the author distributed an edited and updated list of universal precautions (See Appendix A). A question and answer session followed the speaker's half hour presentation.

(B) In addition to the sharing of information regarding healthy child care practices, the author had designed five situations which focused primarily on child safety (See Appendix B). In five small groups the staff was asked to formulate responses which might be appropriate to the individual situation and to prioritize the group's responses. Large group discussion followed in which the author charted whether or not the staff responses to the hypothetical emergencies acknowledged certain considerations established as procedurally correct (See Appendix B). The meeting's agenda allowed for open discussion and valuable staff input.

(C) In another activity, new staff participated in role playing as safety "inspectors". Each was presented with a health and safety checklist and asked to cite violations in a walk-about tour of the facility (See Appendix C). Upon reassembling, the group shared their findings and discussed the appropriate corrections.

(D) A subsequent questionnaire asked the staff to indicate actual changes in their health and safety practices (See Appendix D). The author believed that a combination of passive and active involvement during the inservice training would

reflect improved practices by the staff in their day to day routines and create a higher quality environment for the children.

Weeks 4-6 Benefit Policies

(A) A pre-implementation questionnaire was distributed to the staff requesting input for the formation of a career continuum approach to staff employment and compensation. Open-ended questions provided an opportunity for the employees to express what concerns or changes might be relevant to the determination of professional advancement within the program and the accompanying fair compensation in wages and benefits (See Appendix E).

(B) Subsequently, the author designed and distributed a proposal for professional pathways within the program which displayed a "continuum" approach to staff selection and professional development (See Appendix F). Staff members used sample continuums to determine their current individual status. A discussion followed which highlighted the continuum components, or modules, along which one might progress in incremental stages toward higher compensation and benefits.

Realizing that the full implementation of the continuum would encompass more than a full program year, breaking the continuum down into manageable parts was deemed more practical within the constraints of the author's practicum time period. Additionally, implementation by degrees would have a more gradual impact on the program's calendar and budget. The author in conjunction with the executive director decided that a "menu of benefits" would be the initial focus. Benefit dollars were within the existing budget, and staff had indicated confusion as to the individual relevance of some of the benefits currently provided.

(C) At a regularly scheduled staff meeting, the author presented the plan for the "menu of benefits" explaining its direct link to the proposed career continuum. (See Appendix G).

(D) A post-session questionnaire asked staff to indicate any increased understanding of program benefits as of result of the inservice information provided (See Appendix H).

(E) Staff was invited to schedule individual appointments for clarification or further discussion of their particular wage and benefit concerns.

Weeks 7-9 Professional Ethics

(A) A general staff meeting provided the opportunity for the author to lead an activity designed to increase awareness of professional ethics for early childhood educators. The NAEYC Code of Ethics was the focus of the session (Feeney and Kipnis, 1989). Each staff member was given one of four scenarios depicting an everyday dilemma experienced by early childhood caregivers (See Appendix I). Without prior discussion, each was asked to consider and provide a personal response in writing. These individual responses were collected for later use by the author.

Within small groups, the staff with the same scenario joined to discuss the dilemma and then provide a group consensus response in writing. A group "recorder" wrote the group response while a group "researcher" independently sought assistance from the NAEYC Code of Ethics (Feeney and Kipnis, 1989). Comparisons were made within each group and shared with the entire staff when reassembled for general discussion.

The author provided definitions and examples of the differences and similarities between "personal beliefs" and "professional ethics", and discussion by the group aligned the aforementioned scenarios with appropriate ethical responses. The staff "researchers" shared their findings from the code.

(B) As a post-session activity, the author compared individual responses to small group responses in an analysis of personal beliefs versus group consensus for professional conduct.

(C) In a later follow-up questionnaire, the staff was asked to respond in writing as to their willingness to adopt the NAEYC Code of Ethics, both individually and as a preschool program (See Appendix I).

Week 10 NAEYC Accreditation Staff Questionnaire

(A) Each non-administrative staff member received the NAEYC Accreditation Staff Questionnaire with its accompanying instructions.

(B) Questionnaires were collected and the responses to the three questions relevant to this practicum were tallied. The comparison to previous results was made.

Throughout the implementation phase, it was the author's plan to draft and lead inservice sessions and solicit formal responses from coworkers. Primarily this was accomplished through normally scheduled staff meetings. For approximately three months the author was able to employ existing meeting schedules and already established methods of in-house communication. The distribution and collection of post-activity questionnaires or evaluative instruments was handled through staff file folders at a front office communication center, and through the author's availability each day to any staff member with relevant questions or concerns. The only major

roadblock encountered was the lack of enough time during the third inservice presentation on processional ethics to establish an originally planned "mock court" type of activity. Adjustment required that a planned two hour activity be revised to fit into a one hour time slot. The objective, however, did not vary.

Not considered as a roadblock to the tenth week of the practicum's implementation, but in need of mention was the decision to postpone the start of the official NAEYC accreditation process. For purposes of the practicum, the self-study's Staff Questionnaire was used for a second time simply as a "trial run". The results were considered important to the author's practicum and to future program inservice planning. With re-evaluation of program priorities, the administrators decided that the redesign of the staff evaluation process was of more immediate importance to the preschool. In actuality, a redesigned staff evaluation plan and its accompanying instruments could facilitate the NAEYC accreditation process when it officially begins.

The program staff was very cooperative and supportive during the implementation phase and throughout the entire practicum. Their inservice attendance and prompt return of questionnaires assisted the author in analyzing the data and attempting to meet the objectives.

Chapter IV

Results

Objective #1

The program health and safety questionnaire indicated results of a greater than 50% increase in staff knowledge of appropriate health and safety procedures. Their written responses indicated that this knowledge was actually being put into practice in their day to day routines (See Appendix J). Additionally, on many occasions the author personally observed the staff practicing appropriate universal health precautions. For example, their use of protective rubber gloves when handling first aid situations, and proper and frequent hand washing were some of the more obvious displays of improved health and safety procedures.

Objective #2

In a post-session survey twenty of twenty-four staff members indicated an understanding of the program's benefit plan which met the objective. Of the twenty respondents, each indicated an increased understanding of at least 50% for the program's employee benefit policies (See Appendix K).

Objective #3

During the ninth week of the implementation phase eighteen of twenty-four staff members indicated a willingness to adopt the NAEYC Code of Ethics (See Appendix L). The original objective sought to have twenty of twenty-four persons adopt the code, but this did not allow for the absence of two staff members at the inservice session on professional ethics. The author realized that the non-professional staff would not be attending the inservice training, but other absences were not calculated into the original objective's statistics. This was later rectified by

individually conferring with the absentees, but scheduling conflicts did not allow for these appointments during the practicum's implementation phase. Thus, the objective as originally drafted was not met when two members indicated a need for additional information before agreeing to adopt a formal code of ethics.

Objective #4

Established as a collective means of measuring the objectives, a comparison of previous responses to questions D-3, E-4, and H-22a of the NAEYC accreditation Staff Questionnaire reflected an increase in the number of "fully met" responses of from 40 to 300% (See Appendix M). One newly hired replacement assistant teacher commented that she could not respond with "met" to the three relevant questions because of her unfamiliarity with many of the program's policies and procedures, and that the inservice training took place just prior to her employment. Her response was appropriate to the implementation time line and its statistical data collection, but more importantly, it reinforced the author's original premise that the additional handbook information resulting from this practicum might enlighten and inform a new employee during the orientation process.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

As aforementioned a staff handbook is not a stagnant collection of policies and procedural guidelines but an ever-changing and expanding program tool. It expands and contracts with each new growth or change in the workplace, whether or not it be a child care program. By linking staff handbook revisions to the high quality standards established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the author felt that as the preschool's national accreditation involvement unfolded new procedures would become important to the program's overall quality.

On several occasions the author and staff discussed the reasons for the inservice training sessions and how the topic of concern related to the provision of quality experiences for the children. In regards to the program's health and safety procedures, employees were encouraged to criticize the physical plant, the equipment and the program in regards to the safety of the children. In order for the staff to become some of the most critical observers of the program's provisions for a safe and healthy environment, the opportunity for staff input and evaluation of existing practices occurred. Many experts believe that health and safety policies should be reviewed annually "... in response to program experiences and new medical recommendations" (Kendrick, Kaufman, and Messenger,1988, p. 3). From emergency procedures to hand washing routines the scope of program health and safety is extensive. Inservice training included specific practices as well as general concerns. The author drew from the information provided in the manual,

Healthy Young Children (Kendrick, 1988) because of its comprehensive attention to general and specific health and safety details. Also, child care programs within Florida must be licensed or registered and meet standards established by the state (Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, 1991). Any action taken to revise the program's health and safety policies met or exceeded those standards.

The career ladder approach to employee compensation and benefits is a fairly recent topic in the field of early childhood. As Jorde-Bloom (1991) explained, public school career ladders have been researched for almost a decade longer. Within the scope of the objective, the author assumed the same developmental steps in the establishment of a career ladder as those prescribed in the Jorde-Bloom model: identification of roles; setting of salaries; establishment of a menu of benefits; and determination of methods by which individuals may advance. In a career ladder approach, a staff member's advancement is in a hierarchical format. Recent suggestions for career paths (Dresden and Myers, 1989) and/or career lattices (Christensen, McDonnell, and Price, 1988: Bredekamp and Willer, 1992) suggested that in actuality people also proceed along a horizontal route in their career development. With this in mind, the author had designed a "continuum" concept. The idea of the continuum recognized and acknowledged that careers and compensation are a life long pursuit for any employee and that the pace is different for each person. Stages were charted and percentage increments specified for educational background and job related experience.

Also, it was suggested that a career ladder should include "...additional increments in salary based on performance and participation in professional development opportunities" (NAEYC, 1990, p.32). In the program's history, the

two traditional considerations, years of education and years of experience, had been the more obvious factors in determining wage and benefit compensation. Since any new model for presentation to the staff was to include performance evaluation and participation in professional development, a four component career continuum was designed.

The practicum wished to clarify how staff received benefits. The four component continuum charted the individual through the four continuum paths: education/training; early childhood work experience; performance rating; and leadership/participation in professional development opportunities. By making what was previously subjective criteria into concrete and visible stages on the continuum, staff became more familiar with how benefit dollars were determined and consequently dispersed from a menu of choices.

The author might suggest that any career ladder or continuum consider the four above-mentioned paths as a means of creating a picture of the "whole person" (employee). The gradual increase in the percentage of gross wages for compensation and benefits acknowledges that the more hours and effort one puts into their profession the greater the compensation. The concept provided an automatic pro-ration for part time and full time staff.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children formulated a new code of ethical conduct which was completed after a five year process. The NAEYC enlisted numerous workshops and surveys by professionals in the field of early childhood (Feeney and Kipnis, 1989). Because the national accreditation being pursued by the program was issued by that same association, the author

accepted its exemplary code as the most appropriate model for achieving the stated objective.

Because ethical conduct may denote different things to people of varying backgrounds, the program by initiating the accreditation process was prepared to educate itself and its staff in the accepted practices for high quality programs and mainstream early childhood educators and care providers. "Personal values are not relevant to issues of professional ethics" (Kipnis, 1987, p. 28). A staff member may not prefer to comply with program policies and procedures for personal reasons, yet it may be essential for him to comply for ethical reasons. As indicated by the self-study questionnaire responses, there was a need by the program staff for clarification on this complex issue.

The inservice training provided the necessary exposure and involvement toward increased staff awareness in the making of ethical decisions as professional caregivers. As an administrator, the author felt that the adoption of the NAEYC Code of Ethics provided a comrade for those moments when "someone" has to make the final decision. When one needs an objective and supportive shoulder in making program decisions regarding interactions with the children, the families, and the coworkers the principles and ideals of the code can offer professional assistance.

As a result of the practicum, the program gained important and relevant documents to include in its revised staff handbook. Universal health precautions, health and safety sample situations, a career continuum proposal, an explanation of the menu of benefits, and a national code of ethical behavior provided concrete and fundamental information to the program staff. Yet to be addressed concerns arising

in relation to the implementation of this practicum include elements such as staff evaluation and professional incentives, both elements of the career continuum proposal. From reading professional journals to participation in local and national conferences any program can gain new and valuable information. This author anticipates that additional information will inspire change, and that change will continue to be a part of the on-going process of the preschool's staff handbook revision and its professional growth. Professional knowledge can only propel a program or an individual toward higher quality services in the care and education of young children.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSAL HEALTH PRECAUTIONS HANDOUT

Universal Precautions

The Center for Disease Control recommends that universal precautions be followed at all times since we cannot identify which, if any, children may be infected with HIV or other blood-borne pathogens. It is commonly accepted (and expected) practice in all child care situations as well as health related situations.

AS OF TODAY, ALL STAFF will follow these procedures which apply directly to our situation:

1. Wear gloves when touching blood, body fluids, mucous membranes or non-intact skin of all children. This includes urine, feces, vomitus, respiratory secretions, and drainage from scrapes and cuts.

2. Wear gloves when handling items soiled with blood or body fluids. This will include changing wet or messy pants. (Gloves are by each first aid station and in the kitchen next to the extra clothes.)

3. Change gloves between each patient and dispose of properly. Do not wear the same gloves twice.

4. Put gloves, materials used to clean wounds, used bandages, and any other items soiled with blood or body fluids in a baggie before disposing in the trash.

5. Wash hands and skin immediately and thoroughly after removing gloves and after contact with blood and body fluids. "Handwashing procedure" should include vigorous washing with soap and running water from 10 seconds to a full minute.

6. Do not use needles to remove splinters. Do not perform any invasive procedures. Should they become necessary, call parents or appropriate health care personnel.

7. If needles (sharps) are used for any purpose in the school, by parents or health care personnel, they should be disposed of in puncture resistant containers especially for that purpose.

8. Although saliva is not know to transmit HIV, mouth to mouth resusitaction should be avoided. Resusitation bags, mouthpieces or other ventilation devices should be available when appropriate. (We will get what we need.)

9. Staff with open sores should avoid direct patient contact until the condition resolves.

10. Surfaces that have been contaminated should be cleaned with a solution of 1:10 bleach, or other appropriate disinfectant. (See specific instructions.)

A copy of this will be posted by each first aid station.

APPENDIX B

HEALTH AND SAFETY INSERVICE

Health and Safety Inservice

Emergency Situations

1. FIRE

Sandy walks out of her office after lunch to discover a small fire in the Multi-purpose room. No one else is there. The morning coffee has burned away and the coffee pot has ignited a small blaze! In the various classrooms the children are having nap time. What should she do?

2. CHILD CUSTODY

Three-year-old Katie's parents are divorced. Her mother enrolled her with specific verbal instructions to Sally, the teacher, that Katie's father is not allowed to pick her up. On Friday at loading time a man arrives claiming to be Katie's dad and wanting to take her for the weekend. When Sally explains that she has had no note or call from mom, he says he has limited custody rights and this is his weekend. What does Sally do?

3. LOST CHILD

Mary has taken 1/2 the class out to the Nature Garden for small group. She left the building with 10 children, but when they gather in the Nature Garden, Johnny is not among them. What should she do?

4. FIRE ANTS

Cindy and Cathy have their class out on the back playground. Little Susie comes over to Cindy crying and says that some bugs have bitten her. Upon examination of Susie's legs and ankles Cindy sees multiple ant bites. What does Cindy do?

5. TORNADO

Marcia and Tara are on the playground with the Extended Day children at 4:30 pm under somewhat overcast skies. There are only a dozen children remaining when Sara's mother comes to pick her up. She tells Marcia that there has been a tornado warning for the county just announced on her car radio. What does Marcia do?

Health and Safety Responses--Post-activity Checklist

Important Considerations:	# 1	# 2	# 3	# 4	# 5
The individual child or group of children was made safe and secure.	_	_	_	_	_
The other children in attendance were considered and provided for.	_	_	_	_	_
The staff member's initial response thought of the child first.	_	_	_	_	_
The parents were advised of the circumstances in a calm and truthful manner.	_	_	_	_	_
The proper emergency officials were notified.	_	_	_	_	_
The incident was documented in writing immediately afterwards, signed and filed appropriately.	_	_	_	_	_

APPENDIX C

HEALTH AND SAFETY "INSPECTOR" CHECKLIST

Health and Safety "Inspector" Checklist

Instructions: Walk throughout the facility and search for violations. Note areas where items are located and list violations when found.

Item	Location(s)	Violation(s)
Cleaning supplies, flammables and other potentially poisonous or dangerous supplies are stored out of a child's reach and in such a manner as to insure the safety of children.		
Sharp or potentially dangerous objects such as knives, pointed scizzors, needles and pins are stored out of a child's reach.		
Electrical wall outlets are covered by safety caps when not in use.		
Toilet facilities are clean, conveniently located, accessible to children and stocked with antibacterial hand soap, sanitary towels and proper waste recepticles.		
There shall be first aid supplies-- Bandaids, cotton balls or applicators, sterile gauze, adhesive tape, thermometer, twezzers and scizzors. These supplies are kept in a designated location and labeled "First Aid". A first aid manual shall be accessible.		
All medicines shall be stored separately and locked or placed out of a child's reach in such a manner as to insure the safety of children.		
The facility shall include a designated area for a child who becomes ill while in attendance. Such space shall be adequately ventilated and heated and equipped with a bed or cot and materials that can be sanitized easily. The isolated children must be within sight and hearing of a staff person at all times.		
Fire extinguishers are conspicuously located, show proof of current inspection, and instructions for use.		
Emergency phone numbers including Fire and Ambulance Rescue, Child Abuse Registry and Poison Control must be posted on or near all telephones.		
Emergency exit diagrams are posted in each classroom.		
Emergency information shall be kept for each child in attendance and filed in a designated location.		
The Outdoor Play Area shall be free of litter, nails, glass and other obvious hazards. All stationary equipment shall be firmly anchored. All equipment and fences shall be free of sharp or jagged edges and equipment shall be properly placed to prevent overcrowding or safety hazards in any one area. There shall be areas of both sun and shade.		

OTHER ITEMS NOTED

APPENDIX D

HEALTH AND SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE

Health and Safety Training
Follow-up Staff Questionnaire

Dear Staff,

Please answer these questions about your personal practices toward the improved health and safety of the children in our program. Your signature is not required.

"Since participating in inservice training on program health and safety procedures I have..."

(Please mark your response with an "X")	Same as Before Training	More Frequently
Used protective rubber gloves and/or other universal precautions when handling children with first aid needs.		
Used protective rubber gloves when changing children's clothes after toileting accidents.		
Washed my hands during the school day.		
Instructed children (individually and in small groups) in the procedures and importance of hand washing.		
Interacted more individually with children when reinforcing playground rules.		
Taken the children in small groups and discussed with them the playground safety rules.		
Cited and reported potentially harmful playground or classroom equipment.		
Corrected unsafe or unsanitary conditions in the classroom or attached bathrooms.		
Noticed and avoided potential fire hazards (for example, the use of small electrical appliances, overloaded outlets, etc.).		
Examined the classroom or school environment for fire or other safety hazards (sharp objects, uncapped wall plugs, etc.).		
Questioned or ID'd an unfamiliar person when releasing custody of a child departing for the day.		
Actively looked for the subtle signs of abused or neglected children in my group.		
Sought additional information from parents or other resources regarding the health and safety of the children under my direct care.		

Thank you for your participation! Please return these to me at your earliest convenience. Your comments are welcomed.

Comments:

APPENDIX E

CAREER CONTINUUM QUESTIONNAIRE

The Career "Continuum" Questionnaire

Why have a Career Continuum?

Responses:

--Career continuum strengthens and unifies the organizational structure and expectations of and from staff
--More effective use of teachers talents and abilities recognizing strengths and weaknesses
--Provides incentives and encourages retention of staff
--Encourages better pattern of teacher preparation and provides focus on professional development
--Provides a visible and concrete staff development tool rather than what may appear to be an arbitrary and subjective process
--Supports professionalism to what has been viewed historically as non-professional career
--Larger # of staff may view use of the career "ladder" or "continuum" as something more equitable in the assignment of teaching positions, etc.

What are the implications to the program of adopting a Career Continuum?

Responses:

--Need time to design and implement the process
--Decisions directly effect the program's budget
--Possible repercussions of setting minimum qualifications of employment (for example, CDA for all lead teachers)
--Prioritizing the factors (what is most important to one teacher may not be important to another)
--a more elaborate staff evaluation tool will be needed

What factors should be considered and included in the way a professional child care employee progresses (for example, experience, education, job performance rating, leadership, initiative?)

Responses:

--reward or compensation for attaining a CDA, etc.
--bonuses
--guidelines
--consider reasonable goals with individual considerations
--salary increases
--opportunities for continuing education
--training and experience
--based only upon education has too many variables
--continuing education plans
--opportunities for team teachers
--merit and longevity

How do we establish the Continuum?

Responses:

1. Identify the various roles.
   --job descriptions
2. Set salaries.
   --present salaries are set from base hourly rates of pay because we offer two, three and five day positions and are not working year round
3. Establish a menu of benefits.
   --use of current budget's benefit amounts
   --are they equitable?
   --how would we determine methods of choosing
4. Determine how individuals advance within the program.
   --elaborate steps or stages may become complicated
   --don't we want it to be simple yet accomplish the task?

APPENDIX F

CAREER CONTINUUM PROPOSAL

Proposal for Professional Career Continuum

POSITIONS: .....Assistants.....Teachers.....Administrators.....

	STAGES 1	2	3	4	5
MODULES					
EXPERIENCE (EC or related discipline)	0 - 1 Years	2 years	4 years	6 years	Over 10 years
EDUCATION (30 HRS hours required of all)	HS diploma or GED	CDA	AA in EC or AA general plus 20 hrs. EC or BA/BS Other	BA/BS in EC or BA/BS other plus 30 hours EC	MA/MS in EC or related discipline
EVALUATION (80% Minimum Satisfactory)	+5% follow-up or 85% Total	+10% follow-up or 90% Total	+15% follow-up or 95% Total	+20% follow-up or 100% Total	95% or higher Exemplary ratings
LEADERSHIP/ PROFESSIONAL INITIATIVE	Required inservice attendance only	Plus 5 hrs. voluntary inservice attendance	Plus 10 hrs. voluntary inservice and one leadership position (ie.: level, advisory, inservice)	Plus 10 hrs. voluntary inservice and 2 leadership positions (ie.: level, advisory, inservice)	Plus 20 hrs. voluntary inservice and 2 leadership positions (ie.: level, advisory, inservice)

Sum of Stages*	Future Benefit $ Professional + Personal = % x gross	Annual Raise Rates
15+	All stages have minimum of 1% toward professional choices from Menu.	4.5%
13-14		4.25%
10-12		4%
7-9		3.75%
4-6		3.5%

*Determined annually at time of employment contract.

MENU of BENEFITS

Professional	*Personal*
HRS Requirements	Paid Personal Time
Continuing EC Educ.fees	Child Care Tuition Fees
Paid Professional Time	Medical Insurance Premium
Prof. Assoc. Dues	Retirement Fund Deposits
Conference / Workshop Registration fee	
Professional Journal Subscription fee	

APPENDIX G

MENU OF BENEFITS PLAN

A Menu of Benefits Plan

As we move toward implementing each module on a career continuum, the benefits percentage will increase in relation to the stage to which you have progressed and the parameters of the school's annual budget.

You might ask--

What benefits are available to me?

All professional staff whether part time or full time are provided a choice of the following from a **MENU OF BENEFITS** to equal 7% of your contracted annual gross pay. This percentage method provides an automatically prorated total amount --the more hours you are contracted to work the greater the amount of benefit dollars.

Professional (At least 1%)	Personal (No more than 6%)
HRS Employee Requirements Fingerprinting Abuse Registry TB Test	Paid Personal Time Equal to one regular week's hours as per contract agreement
Continuing Education in Early Childhood Course fees	Child Care Tuition Reimbursement
Paid Professional Day	Medical Insurance Premium Reimbursement
Professional Association Dues	Retirement Fund Deposit Reimbursement
Early Childhood Conference or Workshop Registration Fee	
Professional Journal or Magazine Subscription fee	

How will I indicate which benefits I'd like?

1. Each staff member will have a confidential "Benefits Balance Sheet" (See attached sample).
2. Think of the benefits balance as you would a checkbook balance. As dollars are spent on benefits and reimbursed to you, the benefit dollars you have remaining decreases.
3. For a better understanding of how administration will figure your benefit amount, use bottom half of sample balance sheet to figure your benefits individually. (Substitute your annual gross pay total, etc. for that of the example's.)

How will I receive these benefits?

1. A green file folder labeled "Benefit $ Reimbursements" will be kept by the staff files. As you pay for any of the above menu items out of pocket (those which are relevant), you should place a copy of the receipt or any proof of expense into the file.
2. At the end of each payperiod these receipts will be collected, deducted from your individual benefits balance sheets and paid to you. Some will be taxable income, some will not.
3. You will automatically receive a copy of your benefits balance sheet in October, January and June, and you may have a copy at any other time you request.
4. Those wishing to use child care tuition benefit dollars for our program may be reimbursed monthly by indicating on a separate piece of paper the monthly amount.
5. "Paid Personal Time" will be reconciled in the school year's final paycheck.

What if I have questions?

Please do not hesitate to contact the Managing Director with your individual concerns.

APPENDIX H

BENEFITS QUESTIONNAIRE

Inservice Follow-up
Employment Benefits
Questionnaire

Dear Staff,

Please indicate for each of the following statements whether you were aware of the information "before" or only "after "our staff inservice session.

INFORMATION PRESENTED	Check ( ) "Before"	"After"
1. Employees who work more hours receive more in benefits.	_____	_____
2. All staff is provided benefits equal to 7% of contracted gross pay.	_____	_____
3. A choice of benefits is provided through the "Menu of Benefits".	_____	_____
4. Professional benefits are provided in an amount of at least 1% of gross.	_____	_____
5. Personal benefits include paid personal time equal to one regular week's hours.	_____	_____
6. Many benefits are disbursed with proof of out of pocket expense to the employee.	_____	_____
7. A "Benefits Balance Sheet" will record for each individual all disbursements of benefits.	_____	_____
8. Paid personal time is logged and then reconciled in the final paycheck.	_____	_____
9. Course fees for continuing education in early childhood will be reimbursed through the benefit plan.	_____	_____
10. Reimbursement of the expenses for meeting HRS Employee requirements including the 30 hour child care course is available under professional benefits.	_____	_____
11. Any staff member may be paid from the benefits plan for a "professional day" with the approval of administration.	_____	_____
12. A portion of an employee's child care tuition can be reimbursed.	_____	_____
13. Because many staff members do not require or qualify for an employer provided medical insurance plan one is not provided, but premium assistance is available through the benefit plan.	_____	_____
14. Receipts or proof of expense for most professional and personal benefits must be filed with the office in a green file labeled "Benefit $ Reimbursements".	_____	_____
15. The future determination of benefits is related to a career continuum and the program's annual budget.	_____	_____

Comments:

APPENDIX I

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS INSERVICE

Professional Ethics Inservice Session

Three Ethical Dilemmas (adapted from Feeney, 1987)

1. The Working Mother

Timmy's mother has asked you not to allow her 3 1/2 year old son to nap in the afternoon. She says, "Whenever he naps he stays up until 10:00 at night. I have to get up at 5:00 in the morning to go to work. I am not getting enough sleep." You know that along with the rest of the children, Timmy takes a 1 hour nap almost every day. He seems to need it in order to stay in good spirits for the rest of the afternoon.

2. The Aggressive Child

Eric is a large and extremely active 4-year old who often is aggressive toward other children. You have discussed this repeatedly with the director, who is sympathetic but unable to help. Eric's parents listen but feel that the behavior is typical for boys his age. They won't get counseling. A preschool specialist from the school district has observed in your classroom but her behavior modification recommendations have not helped either. Meanwhile Eric's behavior towards the other children is causing parents to complain. You are becoming stressed and tired and your patience is wearing thin. You and your assistant are spending so much time dealing with Eric that you are worried the other children are not getting the attention they need.

3. The Observer

Kate is a new teacher to the program and has just gone back to school to get her Child Development Associate credential. You are the new Education Coordinator and were not involved in her hiring. Kate has worked in child care for several years (actually one year more than you) and was highly recommended by her previous employer for her classroom and curriculum skills. When you observe her you see the four-year-olds using some workbook sheets. Children are regularly being taught the alphabet and rote counting to 100. You have noticed that most interactions are initiated and directed by adults. When you question the appropriateness of these activities Kate responds that this is what she has done for years and that the parents were very satisfied with it.

Post-session Follow-up Question

To all staff:

If requested to adopt the NAEYC Code of Ethics either as a program or as an individual I would...

_____ have no objections

_____ have some objection because..._____

_____ need further information

APPENDIX J

HEALTH AND SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Health and Safety Training
Follow-up Staff Questionnaire

Dear Staff,

Please answer these questions about your personal practices toward the improved health and safety of the children in our program. Your signature is not required.

"Since participating in inservice training on program health and safety procedures I have..."

(Please mark your response with an "X")	"Same as Before Training"	"More Frequently"
	# of Responses	
Used protective rubber gloves and/or other universal precautions when handling children with first aid needs.	2	16
Used protective rubber gloves when changing children's clothes after toileting accidents.	0	18
Washed my hands during the school day.	3	15
Instructed children (individually and in small groups) in the procedures and importance of hand washing.	4	14
Interacted more individually with children when reinforcing playground rules.	6	12
Taken the children in small groups and discussed with them the playground safety rules.	8	10
Cited and reported potentially harmful playground or classroom equipment.	3	15
Corrected unsafe or unsanitary conditions in the classroom or attached bathrooms.	10	8
Noticed and avoided potential fire hazards (for example, the use of small electrical appliances, overloaded outlets, etc.).	10	8
Examined the classroom or school environment for fire or other safety hazards (sharp objects, uncapped wall plugs, etc.).	9	9
Questioned or ID'd an unfamiliar person when releasing custody of a child departing for the day.	9	9
Actively looked for the subtle signs of abused or neglected children in my group.	10	8
Sought additional information from parents or other resources regarding the health and safety of the children under my direct care.	10	8

Results:
Total Respondents = 18
Of the 18 respondents all answered "More Frequently" on at least 7 of the 13 questions. This indicated an increase in apppropriate health and safety procedures of greater than 50% per individual since participation in the health and safety workshop.

APPENDIX K

BENEFITS QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Professional Ethics Inservice Session

Three Ethical Dilemmas (adapted from Feeney, 1987)

1. The Working Mother

Timmy's mother has asked you not to allow her 3 1/2 year old son to nap in the afternoon. She says, "Whenever he naps he stays up until 10:00 at night. I have to get up at 5:00 in the morning to go to work. I am not getting enough sleep." You know that along with the rest of the children, Timmy takes a 1 hour nap almost every day. He seems to need it in order to stay in good spirits for the rest of the afternoon.

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Eric is a large and extremely active 4-year old who often is aggressive toward other children. You have discussed this repeatedly with the director, who is sympathetic but unable to help. Eric's parents listen but feel that the behavior is typical for boys his age. They won't get counseling. A preschool specialist from the school district has observed in your classroom but her behavior modification recommendations have not helped either. Meanwhile Eric's behavior towards the other children is causing parents to complain. You are becoming stressed and tired and your patience is wearing thin. You and your assistant are spending so much time dealing with Eric that you are worried the other children are not getting the attention they need.

3. The Observer

Kate is a new teacher to the program and has just gone back to school to get her Child Development Associate credential. You are the new Education Coordinator and were not involved in her hiring. Kate has worked in child care for several years (actually one year more than you) and was highly recommended by her previous employer for her classroom and curriculum skills. When you observe her you see the four-year-olds using some workbook sheets. Children are regularly being taught the alphabet and rote counting to 100. You have noticed that most interactions are initiated and directed by adults. When you question the appropriateness of these activities Kate responds that this is what she has done for years and that the parents were very satisfied with it.

Post-session Follow-up Question--Results

To all staff:

If requested to adopt the NAEYC Code of Ethics either as a program or as an individual I would...

18 have no objections

0 have some objection because..._____

2 need further information

Total Reponses 20

APPENDIX L

ETHICS QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Inservice Follow-up
Employment Benefits
Questionnaire

Dear Staff,

Please indicate for each of the following statements whether you were aware of the information "before" or only "after "our staff inservice session.

INFORMATION PRESENTED	# of Responses "Before"	"After"
1. Employees who work more hours receive more in benefits.	2	18
2. All staff is provided benefits equal to 7% of contracted gross pay.	2	18
3. A choice of benefits is provided through the "Menu of Benefits".	0	20
4. Professional benefits are provided in an amount of at least 1% of gross.	0	20
5. Personal benefits include paid personal time equal to one regular week's hours.	11	9
6. Many benefits are disbursed with proof of out of pocket expense to the employee.	0	20
7. A "Benefits Balance Sheet" will record for each individual all disbursements of benefits.	0	20
8. Paid personal time is logged and then reconciled in the final paycheck.	6	14
9. Course fees for continuing education in early childhood will be reimbursed through the benefit plan.	3	17
10. Reimbursement of the expenses for meeting HRS Employee requirements including the 30 hour child care course is available under professional benefits.	4	16
11. Any staff member may be paid from the benefits plan for a "professional day" with the approval of administration.	7	13
12. A portion of an employee's child care tuition can be reimbursed.	4	16
13. Because many staff members do not require or qualify for an employer provided medical insurance plan one is not provided, but premium assistance is available through the benefit plan.	2	18
14. Receipts or proof of expense for most professional and personal benefits must be filed with the office in a green file labeled "Benefit $ Reimbursements".	0	20
15. The future determination of benefits is related to a career continuum and the program's annual budget.	0	20

Results:

Of the 20 respondents each chose "after" for at least 8 of the 15 questions indicating an increased understanding of at least 50% in the program's employment benefit policies and procedures.

APPENDIX M

NAEYC QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

From NAEYC Accreditation
Staff Questionnaire Results

Questions Relevant to Practicum

D-3. New staff are adequately oriented about the goals and philosophy of the center, emergency health and safety procedures, special needs of children assigned to the staff member's care, guidance and classroom management techniques, planned daily activities of the center and expectations for ethical conduct. (p.85)

Responses	"Not Met"	"Partially Met"	"Fully Met"
Previous Results	3	9	7
Current Results	1	1	18

Increase in "Fully Met" over 100%

E-4. Benefit packages for full time staff are negotiated to meet staff members' needs and should include paid leave (annual, sick, and/or personal), medical insurance, retirement, subsidized child care, educational benefits, and other options unique to the situation. Benefits for part-time staff are available on a prorated basis. (p.87)

Responses	"Not Met"	"Partially Met"	"Fully Met"
Previous Results	5	9	4
Current Results	1	3	14

Increase in "Fully Met" over 300%

H-22a. Staff are familiar with emergency procedures such as operation of fire extinguishers and procedures for severe storm warnings (where necessary). (p.90)

Responses	"Not Met"	"Partially Met"	"Fully Met"
Previous Results	2	6	11
Current Results	1	1	16

Increase In" Fully Met" just over 40%